UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1995/173
16 March 1995

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-first session
Agenda item 12

QUESTION OF VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 3 March 1995 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights

I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 17 October 1994 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia, circulated as Commission on Human Rights document E/CN.4/1995/107

The enclosure to the letter made reference to an interview given by Mr. Patrick Nicholls, a British Member of Parliament, after his visit to East Timor in September 1994, and attributed various comments to him. Mr. Nicholls has asked that his own note of the interviews he gave at that time be circulated. I enclose this note.

Mr. Nicholls was the leader of a delegation of members of the UK-Indonesian All-Party Parliamentary Group which visited Indonesia and East Timor from 8-25 September 1994. The views of members of All-Party groups are expressed in an individual capacity and do not necessarily reflect those of Her Majesty's Government.

I have the honour to request that this letter and its enclosure be circulated as a document of the fifty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights.

(Signed) N.C.R. Williams
Ambassador

NOTE BY MR. PATRICK NICHOLLS MP ON HIS VISIT TO INDONESIA AND EAST TIMOR, SEPTEMBER 1994

"Mr. Nicholls gave a number of interviews to the mass media during his visit to Indonesia. He made the point on a number of occasions that no one suggested, not even the Indonesian Government, that there had not been human rights abuses in the past. Similarly, everyone, including the Government, accepted that there was still room for improvement. Members of the delegation however had been told that the laws of Indonesia protected human rights and a number of examples were given to them of the seriousness with which the Indonesian Government took any abuses. He mentioned in particular the Commission for Human Rights which had been established.

"Mr. Nicholls pointed out that members of the delegation had been given impressive examples of Indonesian investment in developing East Timor. They had also been shown the Armed Forces role in their civic mission programmes, for instance in providing computer courses, basic technological training for the East Timor youths.

"Mr. Nicholls said that while the occupation of East Timor was clearly in breach of international law, that situation could only be ultimately regularized by the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal. Those who sought to criticize Indonesia had to understand the history and geography of the region, the natural proximity of East Timor to the rest of Indonesia and in particular the power vacuum which was left when the Portuguese abruptly abandoned their former colony. Mr. Nicholls noted that the Indonesian Government had made clear that they were not simply occupying East Timor but gave a very high priority to continuing development of and investment in East Timor.

"Mr. Nicholls said that much of the criticism voiced in the West against Indonesia generally, and in the matter of East Timor, was grossly exaggerated. In particular the figure of 200,000 deaths in East Timor since 1975, with the implication that those deaths were caused directly or indirectly by the Indonesian military, was accepted entirely uncritically.

"Mr. Nicholls also made it clear that even dissidents had stressed that there had been a marked improvement in human rights matters generally in the last 18 months. Those in the West who accepted uncritically every allegation made against the Government had to ask themselves whether their behaviour was likely to advance or retard the cause of human rights."